



Jesus the Pilgrim on the way to Emmaus, from the Church of San Domingo de Silos, Spain.



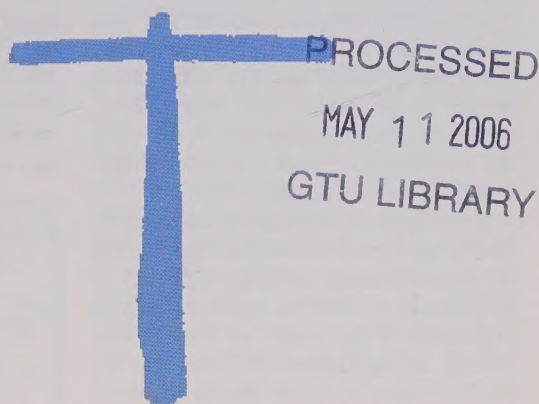
'Pass on Peacefully, Longing for Home'

Colin Wilfred SSF

All of our life is a journey, a pilgrimage, from the time we are born until the time we die and beyond. Human beings have always been on the move, whether singly or in groups, searching and searching for that which is over the next hill, or beyond the mountains or over the horizon. Our journey as homo sapiens has taken us from our probable origins in the continent of Africa through the Middle East and beyond to the furthest limits of Europe, Asia and the Americas. Along the way we have created places: caves, temples, sacred groves and trees, that speak of the divine and of our human longings for food, for space to live well, for fulfilling human relationships.

Years ago in Jerusalem, I was given some wise advice during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land: 'There are no sacred places in Judaism or Christianity, there are only sacred events to which the 'holy places' bear witness and to which we travel to touch the continuing power and grace of

those sacred events'. So the outward physical journey of the body in pilgrimage is, or should be, mirrored by the inner journey of the mind, the spirit and the heart: 'the journey into the self is the journey home to God' (St. Augustine).



To be a Pilgrim

Going on pilgrimage today usually involves using either a plane or a bus, though walking to Compostella has come back into fashion. Whether we want to enact, physically or not, the theme of pilgrimage, the more important journey is the journey of the heart. Here is an introduction to this theme as we find it through human experience, or the religious practice of many faiths, in Francis and Clare, or in those small places where prayer has been found to be valid and the veil between heaven and earth is thin and always the call to each one of us is – "to be a pilgrim".

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Basically, the journey, the pilgrimage, is made not just for its own sake but out of a longing, an expectation, of inner transformation. As Daniel O'Leary in his book *Travelling Light* puts it, "It is God that does the transforming, all we have to do is show up and start walking".

Within the Judaeo-Christian tradition we find many varieties of pilgrimage which can illuminate the different ways of our own spiritual journeys beginning with the journey into exile of Adam and Eve who, having walked in the garden with their Creator, become homeless and strangers in the world that was created for them as they continually search for the way to return home.

In the figure of Abraham we are called by God to leave the homeland and the familiar to become nomads, travelling with faith in the promises of God. The archetypal pilgrim experience of the people of God is ever recalled in the Hebrew Passover and the Paschal festival of Easter with its themes of escape and protection on the journey: the presence of God made known in mountain-top and desert experiences, fire and cloud, ark and covenant. A journey where the going is so often through difficult terrain but where God never abandons his people and there is a promised land at the end.

Three times a year at the pilgrim feasts of Unleavened Bread, Weeks and the Ingathering of the Harvest the Hebrews were called to come to Jerusalem to renew their commitment to live in covenant with God and to live in God's justice with others. Psalms 120-134, frequently used in the daily prayer of Christian communities, have their origin as pilgrim songs on the journey from earth to heaven, from curse to blessing, from judgement to salvation, expressed through prayer and praise, confession and complaint, trial and trust. Building on this lived experience are the prophets (for example Isaiah 60-66) as they promise and long for the coming of the Messiah, have visions of the whole earth and all its peoples streaming towards God's mountain on pilgrimage.

When we move into the world of the New Testament, especially the Gospels, we find ourselves surrounded by familiar scriptural images of pilgrimage centred on Jesus



Pilgrim, Chester Cathedral

of Nazareth who is the archetypal pilgrim; indeed he is God's pilgrim travelling the journey of new creation and salvation. Jesus is the Son of Man and Son of God; he is the new Adam identifying with God's people in exile, having

nowhere to lay his head. He is also the fulfiller of Abrahamic faith obedient to the call of God. He comes out of Egypt and, like the Hebrews of old, he too encounters God on the mountain-top and in the desert; he is the fulfiller of the new covenant. Jesus goes regularly on pilgrimage from childhood onwards to the holy city of Jerusalem – a pilgrimage which reaches its climax in his final Passover pilgrimage where he achieves his Exodus through the sufferings of his passion, his death on the cross and the triumph of his resurrection. Jesus Christ the messiah, above all when he is lifted up on the cross, draws all people to himself.

"It was part of a pilgrim's life to shelter under another's roof, and pass on peacefully, longing for home."

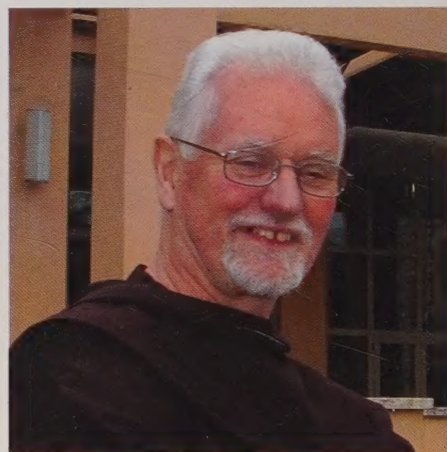
The rest of the New Testament is the story of the pilgrimage which takes the new people of God from Jerusalem to Rome, the earthly centre, and beyond to the heavenly centre of the new Jerusalem, the city of God coming down out of heaven. As the author of Hebrews states, "You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (Heb.12.22).

Throughout Christian history, pilgrimages have been made, whether physically or spiritually as in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Douglas Vest in his book *On Pilgrimage*, gives us a useful summary of the process of making a traditional Christian pilgrimage:- first, the pilgrim sets a goal for him or herself to go to a particular place connected with a holy person or event or signs of the divine; second, the pilgrim prepares for the journey. In the Middle Ages this included amongst the more spiritual items, the mending of broken relationships, settling debts and drawing up a will – after all there was a good chance you might not return!

The pilgrim set off at a favourable time and tried always to travel in company with others. The journey was normally made on foot, that is with simplicity and humility (from 'humus', earth) and lacking earthly power. At one or more points there would be the importance of crossing some kind of 'threshold' to encounter the holy – a 'liminal' experience. When pilgrims reached their destination there was always a ritual process to be celebrated: honouring relics, drinking holy water, receiving blessings or sacraments, giving alms to the poor. In return, the guardians of the holy place would give some badge or mark to show that the pilgrims had performed penance and reached their goal. The final stage was the homecoming. The pilgrim returns as a new person, one who has made the journey of faith and conversion, one who has touched and been touched by the sacred.

A favourite phrase of Francis of Assisi in his prayers and writings was the call to "walk in the footprints of Jesus". His own spiritual journey took him from his birthplace (although he always returned to it) to Rome and Egypt and by tradition also to the Holy Land and to Compostella. In his *Rule* he, like Clare, refers to his followers as, "pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility; let them go seeking alms with confidence" (*Later Rule* 6.1-2). "And so they went through the world as pilgrims and strangers, taking with them nothing but the Christ crucified" (*Little Flowers* 5). One of the most beautiful expressions of Francis' desire for the pilgrim life comes in Bonaventure's *Major Legend* 7.2 "It was part of a pilgrim's life to shelter under another's roof, and pass on peacefully, longing for home".

In that simple phrase, we see the many elements of pilgrimage: human, other faiths, Jewish and Christian, woven together with typical elements of Francis' vocation; dependence on others in poverty and humility, to travel in life as a bringer and creator of peace, to recognise our true home in God and Jesus Christ and to long for it with all our heart. f



Colin Wilfred lives in the Canterbury friary and is responsible for ongoing formation in the European Province.

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Clare the Pilgrim

Frances Teresa Downing OSC

In a recent article in the newsletter of the Third Order Regular, Nancy Celaschi OSF makes the interesting point that, in the Franciscan sources, most of the early references to being strangers and pilgrims do not refer to aspects of the itinerant life, but to the way the brothers dwell in their abodes. That rather unexpected insight leads us to wonder how Clare, permanently in her abode, might have expressed that same pilgrimage imperative, and in this article I would like to reflect a little on some aspects of this.

When we look at Clare's flight from home on that Palm Sunday evening, it is quite clear that the whole adventure was carefully orchestrated and planned. Some details that we might consider important were left out – like where she was to go after joining the friars – but all the elements that mattered to her were present. It was the beginning of Holy Week. She had shared in the triumph of Palm Sunday by going to the Cathedral for Mass in all her finery, her red dress, her temporal glory. She gave the world a bill of divorce (*Legend of Clare* 8). That night she took a further step, leaving home to go 'outside the camp' of Assisi (Hebrews 13) and share the degradation 'of Christ. Degradation means down-grading which she was certainly doing, shifting from the top of the pile (*nobilitas*) to the bottom (*vilitas*) where people had no rights, no resources, no power, no clout – all things she was used to having in abundance. It is noteworthy that Clare often speaks of Christ's 'downgrading'

from the Trinity to the impoverishment of our humanity. This suggests that although it was wholeheartedly chosen, it was not

Clare was a true pilgrim, travelling from all (nobilitas) to nothing (vilitas) in order finally to enter the All.

always easy but demanded constant attention and commitment on her part. Yet at the end of her life she asserted that nothing had been 'bothersome', no penance too severe, no weakness hard (*LegCl* 44). This only makes credible psychological sense within the frame of her own advice to Agnes in the four letters. There we see her balancing the poverty of Christ's humanity against his centrality in the glory of the Kingdom (eg *1Ag* 15-24; *2Ag* 5-7; *3Ag* 12-14; *4Ag* 15-23).

It is clear that this was a key concept for her and that it set, so to speak, the two extremes of Christ's archetypal journey through our humanity, and therefore of her own journey since this down-grading journey of Christ's is the pattern for any Christian: 'I came from the Father and have come into the world, now I leave the world to go to the Father.' (John 16.28)

So Clare, too, left the world to go to the Father. Her starting point was different from Christ's but her journey took her through a parallel self-emptying or *kenosis*. Her map was her option to have and desire nothing but God. This made her into a true pilgrim, travelling from all (*nobilitas*) to nothing (*vilitas*) in order finally to enter the All. Mendicancy for Clare was an articulation of trust, an entry into the heart of paradox where she could travel infinite spaces while staying in the one place of San Damiano. With this, the

unknown, the unstable and the risky formed a firm and God-filled foundation for her life. They were transformed into the country across which her pilgrim heart would journey towards the One who would 'kiss her with the happiest kiss of his mouth' (*4Ag* 32) – and we recall here Bonaventure's comment in a sermon on St John, that this kiss between God and humanity is Christ himself. This journey for Clare was not simply her personal pilgrimage, but is profoundly integrative because it is the journey of all humanity and even, possibly, the journey of all creation as it travels to Teilhard's Omega point of Christ. Certainly we see that for Clare, the very process of entering so fully into this pilgrimage of the heart to God brought about the paradoxical effect that she was, like Adam and Eve, made completely at home wherever she might be. About Clare, as about Adam and Eve in the beginning, the Lady Poverty could say: '... having nothing of their own, their only concern was for God' (*Sacrum Commmercium* 25).

Content to be pilgrims and strangers, they discovered that this made them guests of the Most High: 'The Lord loves the stranger, providing him with food and clothing' (Dt 10.18).

In Chapters 6-10 of her *Rule* Clare deals with some of the practical implications of this, expressed in terms of *sine proprio* (without owning anything), and she explores it into the dry estuaries of material want and physical illness. As always, the early verses set the vision and the details come later: 'Let the sisters appropriate nothing as their own, neither a house nor a place nor any other thing. And like pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them send for alms with confidence' (*Rule of Clare* 8).

Clare and Francis left the camp to share the degradation of Christ and found they had inherited the freedom of the world.

This, then, is the vision, that Friar Christ, the Lord of glory, became our brother and entered into extremes of loss in order to reveal to us the wholly different value system of the Wholly Other, God. In his book *Living in the End Times*, James Alison, a modern theologian, says some interesting things about Scripture as a progressive revelation of the innocence of the victim, a revelation culminating in the death of Christ, the wholly Innocent One where God is revealed as definitively on the side of the victim. I think Clare, who imitated Christ by

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St Clare's life in pictures, from the Church of Santa Chiara, Assisi. The sequence begins in the bottom left corner with the Bishop of Assisi giving Clare a palm at the Cathedral on Palm Sunday morning.

Small Pilgrim Places

Jim Cotter



They draw us to them, over the centuries and over the miles. They are small, often tucked away, not easy to find. There are no brown signs by the road to lure the tourist to a place of interest. Yet they often hold a story, of a community and its ancestors, of a land and its husbandry, of a people of faith and doubt, praying, burying, pondering.

Nowadays they are often forlorn, these churches and chapels, neglected, with not enough people nearby to sustain regular Sunday worship, perhaps used once or twice a year. We struggle with our consciences. We can't afford to keep them going, but we would betray our ancestors, perhaps ourselves too, perhaps even God, if we declare them redundant and sell them to prop up clergy pension funds.

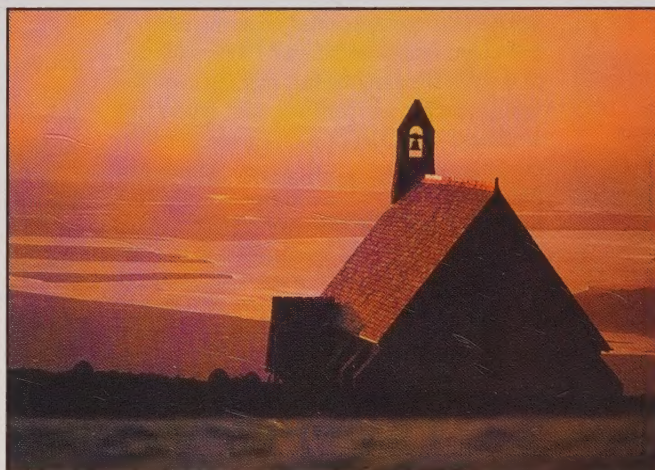
Some of us would prefer them gently to decay. Perhaps we can take the roof off, and declare (for insurance purposes) that the building is now a safe ruin. Well, that may be one solution. You can be given to pondering in a ruin, and a leaflet can show it as it was. And maybe, given how some of us were nudged into faith by personal calamity, we are nearer God's heart in a ruin than anywhere else on earth.

But it seems a pity if we can't find a more creative use for these evocative buildings. Small pilgrim places? Well, the large places get enough publicity and are often crowded in the summer. And there are places enough for settlers, not as many for those on journeys, people on the move again as pilgrims. And we may ponder the things of God in all manner of places – churches and chapels, yes, but small galleries too, and the homes dedicated to those who inspire us from the past.

It's no easy task, though, to create uncluttered space, to keep it quiet, conducive to the silence in which we may better discern a presence, to welcome people warmly but not intrusively, to encourage thoughtfulness and conversation in introducing a place and its story and its questions. I hear the cry of the heritage industry: Preserve them as they are, for their architecture, their art, their history. I think of a chapel at Rug, near Corwen, with its beautiful painted wood panels dating from Tudor times (not to mention the discreet visitor centre and car park paid for by who knows what funding from the far reaches of the continent). It is certainly an attractive place, commendable in its way, but it has no soul. The Spirit has departed. And I hear the cry of the tourist industry, Let's get together with the churches and encourage the spread of visitors to relatively unfrequented areas of our national parks and relieve the pressure on the 'honey

pots'. Again, there are grants galore for repairs and facilities. Again, commendable, but is it not something lost if we don't make some places conducive to the kind of visit that can alter the glazed eyes of the tourist into the focussed eyes of the pilgrim?

I believe it is possible. I've been conducting an experiment since 2000 (it's for seven years) at a small church in Gwynedd in north-west Wales, at Llandecwyn, six hundred feet above the estuary of the River Dwyryd. You can see Portmeirion on the far side, you can sometimes hear the whistle of the Ffestiniog Railway, and on a clear day



you can make out the whale back outline of Ynys Enlli, Bardsey Island, some thirty miles due west.

The church now has two uses. The furniture can be arranged in conventional style for the three or four occasions in the year when it is used by the local parish: Harvest, Christmas and one or two rites of passage. In the summer months the pews are rearranged to make a more open space, without clutter, and with nothing to distract the eye or ear.

Each day, from two to five, there is a 'hospitaller' present to offer simple hospitality, perhaps an answer to a question, sometimes a cup of tea and a listening ear. There is always some prayer, sometimes simply fifteen minutes of silence, at other times more formal. There is a 'meditation trail', a leaflet that takes visitors round the churchyard and the church, alerting them to what they can see and inviting them to ponder and reflect. This slows people down after winding their way towards the church along narrow country lanes. They become more likely to stop in their tracks, to find that

they are 'held' by something or someone in the atmosphere of the building. Some would say that the patron saint, Tecwyn, about whom we know nothing except that he was around these parts in the 520s, has come back. One person spent a couple of hours in silence one afternoon and afterwards said, You couldn't possibly be lonely here: it's crowded.

Maybe such places can offer a little more than a ruin. It's often breezy and cool up that hill, and at least you can shelter from the wind. And the silence can deepen inside, in contrast to the sound licking the walls from the west. Even Philip Larkin, in his poem *Churchgoing* discerned the human need for the places where 'our compulsions meet, are recognized, and robed as destinies.' They need to be quiet places, where the seeker and the searcher, the bruised and the vulnerable, can feel at home.

You will be welcome if you find yourself travelling this way this summer. The plan is for the church to be open and welcoming between 25 May and the end of September. Visit the website smallpilgrimplaces.org.uk or contact the hospitaller Jim Cotter on 01766 781 368 jim@cottercairns.co.uk, living at Dwyllan, Stryd Fawr, Harlech, LL46 2YA.

There is plenty of accommodation in the area, everything from campsite down to country house hotel. Ah, that's a very Franciscan way of putting it. And you may find it more convenient and evocative to visit Greyfriars in Canterbury. With Llandecwyn, that makes two small pilgrim places, but the number is increasing.

On the last afternoon of the 'season' in 2003, at the end of the half-term week in October, the very last visitors were a Muslim family from the Midlands, father, mother, two daughters aged about twelve and ten. They sat quietly for ten minutes or so, and then the father came up to me and said, Thank you, I find I can pray here. f



Jim Cotter is an ordained minister of the Church in Wales, writes and publishes as Cairns Publications, enjoys theatre, hills and eating with friends.

Hilfield Friary 2006

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Saturday 24 June

10.00 am. – 4.00 p.m.

*

Stigmata Festival

Saturday 16 September

beginning with a Sung Eucharist
at 12 noon

*

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Led by Kevin SSF & Beth Buchan TSSF

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lunch – hot drinks provided.

*

Third Order Silent Retreat

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*

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*

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or to stay at the friary, please advise the
Friary Secretary (01300 – 341345)

or by email

hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk

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opting for vulnerability and weakness, sensed all this, although she used different language from that of a modern theologian. When she speaks of the poverty, humility and love of Christ, she is describing the Icon of Innocence hung on the cross for our consideration: 'In that mirror shine blessed poverty, holy humility and unutterable love as, by the grace of God, you can contemplate in the whole mirror.' (4Ag 18)

In that mirror we see the non-possessiveness of Christ through whom the universe was created; we see the one who, by emptying himself was able to hold authority as totally loving service. We are unable to grasp the fullness of Christ's being, but Clare came close to understanding it by, I suspect, continual reflection of what we might call the size of the space which Christ had to carve out in order to contain this radical self-emptying. This is what she is groping for when she speaks of his 'blessed poverty, holy humility and unutterable love'. She can have no other words for this than the traditional ones of poverty, humility, innocence, 'the King of Angels, Lord of heaven and earth, lies in a manger'.

As we read her letters, we sense the paradoxes piling up in her mind and illumined for us by the intensity of her awareness. The riches behind this self-emptying of Christ seem powerfully real to her especially in the fourth letter where the extremes are held in a tense balance, each revealing and enriching the other, both indicating something beyond our understanding. This victim, she says, is the One 'at whose beauty all the heavenly hosts ceaselessly admire.' (4Ag 10)

This wholly Poor Man is the goal of all our journeying, both the map of our travelling and the landscape across which we travel for he is also one of us. More than that, he is the revelation of our true self to each of us. In him we will come to our true home and discover that while we journeyed we had been travelling through him, living with him and journeying in him. In the words of Boethius: 'Thou art the journey and the journey's end.' f



Frances Teresa OSC is a member of the Poor Clare Community in Arundel though she is currently living as part of a small inter-Friar Franciscan Community in St Leonards on Sea.

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*

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Pilgrimage for Change and Justice

Barbara Butler

Part of my work in Christians Aware is organising conferences and there is one that will always remain in my memory. It was a shared conference with four other organisations and it was about pilgrimage in the Middle East. One of the speakers told the story of his journey to Gaza to meet and be with the people there at a troubled time. The story was a vivid account of a journey of struggle and sharing in the dire setting of people who faced trauma almost every day of their lives.

I remember the conference because some of the listeners were enraged that the speaker had told of a hard pilgrimage with people who were suffering but had made no mention of the holy places or of the refreshment of the pilgrims. The rest of my day was spent in preventing all-out warfare between the conference participants, and not really succeeding.

As I reflect on the conference and the nature of pilgrimage I can only hope and pray that all pilgrims may develop real awareness of the wider world and its people, many of whom struggle and suffer. Every true pilgrim surely begins the journey with love for the world and for the people he or she will focus on and also meet along the way. Sometimes the inspiration for the journey may become clearer as the way unfolds and the pilgrimage, as well as providing a catalyst for change amongst both pilgrims and the people they meet, may become lifelong.

The pilgrim who is open to people, places and events is moving in the finest tradition of pilgrimage, which is as old as people, an exciting challenge to people of every faith and inevitably involving worry and uncertainty as well as new life and hope. The pilgrim has always left the familiar, including family and friends, and moved into the unknown. The pilgrim has always been vulnerable and exposed rather than comfortable and secure. Meeting strangers is at the heart of pilgrimage and the people met on pilgrimage cannot be missed out or

gone round. It is vital for the pilgrim to a new country, culture or faith to learn to trust others, to live with the people met in a new way, to experience their way of life, whether easy or hard, and to come to see the reality of the world afresh.

Anita Desai wrote a story about a man's

The pilgrim is someone who makes connections between peoples, ways of life, and religions, between spiritual awareness and practical down to earth living and working, between the things of life and the things of death, between earth and heaven, God and humanity.

search for an artist. When he found him he was old and ill and living in a pile of rags. But he was still the wonderful artist, and he could not be met and listened to, except through the pile of rags he inhabited.

The pilgrim is someone who makes connections between peoples, ways of life, and religions, between spiritual awareness and practical down to earth living and working, between the things of life and the things of death, between earth and heaven, God and humanity.

Through Christians Aware visits I have found many wonder-filled opportunities to go on pilgrimage, to make connections and to share challenges. I have enjoyed wonderful and surprising hospitality, including the special sweets given in a Calcutta slum and the wonderful spicy dishes shared in war-torn Sri Lanka. I have travelled to a Muslim community in Upper Egypt during the month of Ramadan and have found a warm welcome and good food, offered by people who were fasting. I have driven to a remote Maasai homestead in north western Kenya and been given hot rice and barbecued goat by people who seemed to have nothing to eat.

A special memory is of making a journey to a very remote part of Tanzania, where everything was covered in dust and the people were poor and ragged. We walked round the village and prayed in the small wooden church before being taken to a low building where wooden tables were laid out with tin plates and mugs. The meal was of delicious fish taken from the lake and chapattis which had been made that morning. I was taken back to the story of Jesus feeding the hungry people with the loaves and fishes given by the small boy.

Every year Christians Aware holds a sponsored pilgrimage to raise money for a boys' ashram in Kerala. The boys are orphans, those who have been abandoned by their parents and those whose parents cannot look after them. The pilgrimage includes meditation and some news of the boys and the ashram. Sometimes photographs of the boys are brought along for pilgrims to look at. The person who organizes the walk had never visited the Kerala ashram until this year when she made an almost superhuman effort to travel to India, undertaking a very long eleven hour journey by road to the ashram to meet the boys. She was almost in tears as she entered the ashram to the sound of the boys singing their welcome songs, and they in turn were overjoyed to receive their visitors. The pilgrimage which began with a Derbyshire walk will hopefully go on for as long as children in Kerala need love and a home.

In the 'old days' of apartheid in South Africa we organised a Christians Aware pilgrimage which took British and South African people, Christians and Buddhists, from Henley-on-Thames to Trafalgar Square, stopping to sleep in church halls along the way and also giving talks and entering into discussion with members of the communities. There was an astounding moment at one of the meetings in a village hall. A video of life in South Africa under apartheid had been shown, followed by a short talk by a South African who had been in prison there for opposing apartheid. The moment came when an elderly woman stood

Continued on page 7



Barbara Butler is the Executive Secretary of Christians Aware, an educational and international charity working for development, justice and peace. Their website can be found at www.christiansaware.co.uk



Children at the Mar Thoma Ashram welcome a group of pilgrims from Christians Aware.

Minister's Letter

Sister Joyce CSF

Minister General of the First Order Sisters, writes:

Dear Friends,

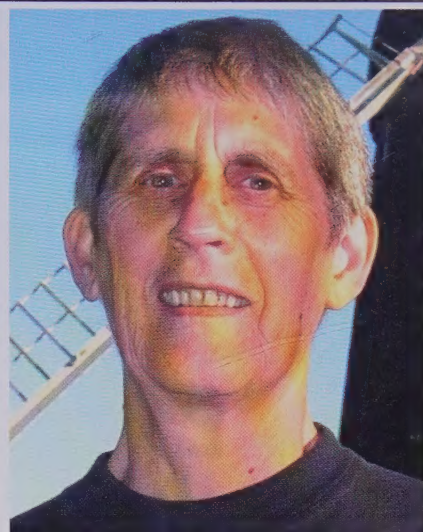
At a recent meeting of CSF sisters we were discussing how to live with diversity and the question that emerged from that conversation was 'How do we hold on to our own integrity when others assume we have no integrity?' We did not discover the answer. However, we recognised that it is a crucial question to try to explore when faced with the vexatious subject of living with diversity and/or difference in any area of life, for it is at the heart of community life in the context of the world in which we now live. The one thing we did discover was the different interpretations that we put on that word 'integrity'. In the Church of England we struggle with living with two 'integrities' in the sense of a principle regarding the ordination of women; in other areas it means wholeness as in the integrity of creation; for yet others it is very personal in the sense of virtue and honesty. So it can be very crushing and demoralising if I feel that another is implying I have no integrity.

This struggle has the potential to be either enriching and creative, holding apparent opposites in creative tension, or to be divisive and destructive when there is impasse and a line is crossed, a tolerable limit has been reached. As Franciscans in the First Order we try to live in creative tension between the active and contemplative aspects of our religious life. Division has already happened in some parts of the Anglican Communion

over the ordination of women.

Nevertheless this does not absolve us from exploring the issues together whatever our views, for without conversation, without listening to each other, without learning from each other, without making room for changing views or even some compromise on both sides, the gap will never have a chance of being bridged. Entrenched positions get us nowhere, they just widen the gap or force division. Marcus J. Borg in his book *The Heart of Christianity* very clearly describes the sharp differences at the heart of Christianity and offers potential ways of bridging the gap. The recognition of Christian diversity, the fact that there are many ways of being Christian and that no group has cornered the market on the truth, is a first step in this process. He suggests we need to be involved in an 'unending conversation' – with the Bible, the Christian tradition and each other.

The Anglican Communion is grappling with this before our very eyes over same sex relationships, particularly in relation to the ordination of priests and bishops who are openly homosexual. This is not the first time that big issues have threatened church unity or even broken it! During the meetings of the Chapters of the First and Third Orders in Canterbury last year we gave time to discuss the issues together, to listen to each other, to read the scriptures together, to recognise our differences within SSF and the



church. We recognised our common vocation as 'lesser brothers and sisters' united in faith and intention to live out our Christian discipleship in a Franciscan way. From our meetings the Ministers General of the First and Third Orders and the Abbess of the Second Order wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury expressing our love and support as he appeals to Anglicans to value diversity as a core element of unity.

As an international community with members in parts of the Anglican Communion that may be split off if the struggle for the Communion to hold the divergent views together becomes too great, we are committed to that 'unending conversation', to remain united in spite of our differences.

Pax et Bonum

Joyce CSF

Continued from page 6

up and gave a speech, the first in her life, during which she told everyone that she had always thought that apartheid was sensible and that her son and his family lived in South Africa. She continued, 'I will write to them and tell them that apartheid is wrong and that they should come back to England.' From that moment on the pilgrims, including those from South Africa who had suffered oppression and depression, were given new life and hope. The remaining journey was full of energy and even happiness, together with commitment for change and justice.

When the Maasai priest I know goes visiting he sets out to walk long distances in the scrubland of north western Kenya until he finds the people. When he finds them he lives with them and listens to them. He knows that though they are poor they are his trusted friends, those who will continue the journey with him, facing whatever the future may bring. Every pilgrim, walking with faith and trust in God and in people along the way may seek to change the world so that it is a fit place for God and for every person. f

Theme Prayer



God of the journey
your presence is like a voice within us
calling us onwards,
calling us home.

May our feet turn towards you,
that passing on in peace
we may come to our eternal homeland
with Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

Saint Francis seen through the centuries down the centuries

Francis was an artist: he expressed himself through poetry and action, song and dance and above all through a creative life responding to his Creator, the ultimate artist. Everywhere he saw the beauty of God's love, however blemished through suffering and sin. It is not surprising, therefore, that artists down the centuries have tried to depict the 'little poor man of Assisi'.

1. This fresco at Subiaco is often thought to be the earliest surviving icon (not a portrait) of Francis. He is described as 'Fr' for frater (brother) not saint as he would have been after his canonisation in 1228 and he does not bear the stigmata received in 1224.
2. Probably the best known picture of Francis – a fresco in the Lower Church at Assisi, by the thirteenth century artist Cimabue.
3. A copy at Greccio of a portrait commissioned by Francis' friend, Lady Jacoba, depicting Francis two years before his death when he was suffering both physically and spiritually.
4. An icon of Francis from the church where he used to stay in Rome.
5. This early depiction of Francis at St Mary of the Angels includes the claim that it is painted on the boards from his bed!
6. A large thirteenth century crucifix at Arezzo expressing Francis' identification with the passion of Christ.
7. A fourteenth century banner with Francis dressed as a deacon and enthroned in heaven. Francis as part of a religious cult.
8. A dramatic depiction of the stigmata by Caravaggio, c.1594.
9. The popular modern version of Francis with the inevitable birds.
10. A contemporary German version of Francis, 'The troubadour of God.'
11. Modern stained glass at York Minster – on the left, Francis helping a child release wild birds, on the right, Francis and the leper.

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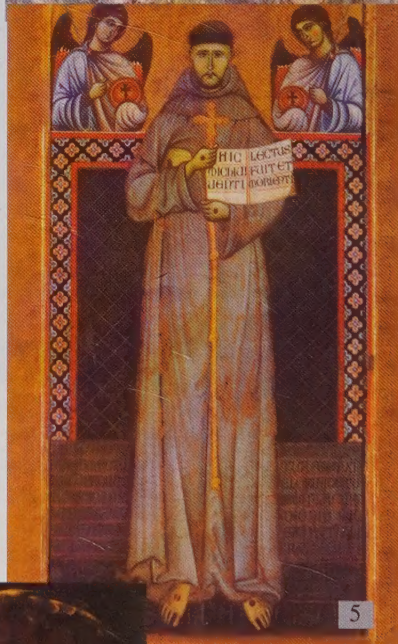
OFM Conventuals: 1,2,3,5,6,9;

Cathedral, Assisi: 7;

Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford USA: 8;

Maria Laach:10;

York Minster:11.



gh the eyes of artists centuries



Community Routes

◆ ◆ Solitude, Silence, Stability

Gwenfryd Mary is one of three CSF sisters who is a hermit. Here she writes about this life, which despite the Benedictine sound to the heading, has been part of the Franciscan tradition since the time of Francis.

Silence, solitude, stability – these are the three things which the hermit has to offer to the world and to his or her religious community of Sisters and Brothers, and also to the wider body of the Church.

These days there are very many variations on the theme of the eremitical life. In no way is it to be seen as narrow, rigid and stereotyped. There is no rigid pattern of living which is followed by each hermit. Each person called to this way of life is very different, each one's rule varies from the next person's rule. With each one we hopefully find silence, solitude and stability, and a searching after God and the things pertaining to God. Obviously, I can only speak of my own first hand experience of living this type of life – I can only guess at how others work it out, and occasionally share ideas with them.

Hermits and solitaries are found living out their lives both inside and outside of religious orders. The variety of experience and expression is tremendous, as various as the individuals living in this way, each one concentrating on living out his or her life of prayer, devotion, contemplation, good and bad times, high and low times, times of depression, loneliness, bleakness and frustration, emptiness and fullness: times of joy and depths of happiness in a surrounding of cultivated silence, solitude and stability. This, then, is how we live – some of us supported and enabled by our communities and others 'going it alone'.

I attempt to live it out with simplicity and faithfulness. I always try to remember the three aforementioned 'S words' – I feel very strongly about their importance in my everyday life. Indeed, without them there would be no hermit life, no dedication to prayer and contemplation. There is something very drastic about this call, this compulsion to go it alone, and to find in it peace and fulfilment; to find in it a forward movement and also a stillness – a *keeping* still. To onlookers it will seem a waste of life, a crazy thing to do, an obsession, a piece of fantasy. To hermits it is the only way – the way which means everything and all things.

It is like a ploughman who focuses his gaze on 'the mark' set at the furthest end of his field as he ploughs the furrow, so hermits have to walk a straight line to their 'mark'

which is Christ crucified, risen and glorified.

Henri Nouwen, in his book *Clowning in Rome*, puts it like this:

Solitude, celibacy, prayer and contemplation are values for all people, but some men and women have the unique vocation to give special visibility to these values and to guard them with special care. Whenever these values are lived out authentically and generously, what becomes visible is not a spiritual virtuosity, good for a select few, but a way of life which speaks to many.

◆ ◆ St Thomas's Chapel

Gwenfryd Mary continues:

It is my very good fortune to reside where I do as the property here belongs to the Church in Wales and one of the two buildings on the site is a Norman 'Beacon Chapel' dating from 1180. It is a Grade II listed building; the other building is the bungalow in which I live.

This little Beacon Chapel has a very interesting and varied history. It is dedicated to St Thomas à Becket and at its foundation it served as a form of lighthouse. It was maintained and serviced by the Benedictine monks from the priory which was situated about two miles inland from here at what is now one of the outer edges of the town.

When the priory was built the town of Milford Haven did not exist, except perhaps for a few fishermen's abodes and the only building visible from the waters of the estuary and the sea would have been St



St Thomas's Chapel, Milford Haven.



Two beginnings:

Brother Augustine Thomas's Life Profession was received by Bishop Michael Perham, Bishop Protector of the three Orders in the European Province, at Alnmouth Friary, on 9 February 2006. Bishop Michael took up office at the beginning of Advent 2005, and the occasion was marked by a service of welcome at Hilfield Friary on 7 December.

Thomas's perched high up on its rocky foundations. The monks would have cared for the lighting of the cresset up on the roof. It was one of three of its kind along the sides of the waterway. The other two were down at its furthest end – one at each side, the Angle Bay Chapel on the south side and the St Anne's Head Chapel on the north side. There is a modern lighthouse at St Anne's Head now.

The chapels fell into disuse and disrepair at the Reformation and the only one still extant is St Thomas's. Its shell was extensively renovated in the early 1930s by the then vicar of St Katherine's and St Peter's Parish (the Milford Haven parish), an enterprising man who got the complete work done for £900. The result is a very attractive, simple little chapel which still draws visitors and pilgrims, in a steady, quiet way. During the warmer times of the year a weekly Eucharist is held there, with the vicar presiding and a nucleus of regular worshippers.

At the time of the renovation of the chapel, stones from each of the cathedrals in England and Wales were brought here to be used in the construction of the altar, the centre one

being from Canterbury Cathedral. There are also two floor tiles set in the front of the altar, remnants from the pre-Reformation floor covering. During the Civil War the chapel was used as an ammunition dump and in later times it housed animals and farm equipment.

Outside in the yard there is a grave marked with a simple cross, reputed to be the last resting place of a Norman soldier. On the east wall there is an incised cross, much worn by time, and probably the original consecration cross. The chapel has five windows, three of which have coloured and leaded glass. These depict the Annunciation, St Hugh of Lincoln and St Thomas à Becket. Above the altar is a modern triptych which tells the story of the setting. The centrepiece shows the martyrdom of St Thomas. This is flanked on one side by a picture illustrating the scene during the Civil War, whilst the other side depicts the Quaker Fathers arriving at Milford. There still remains a strong connection with the Quakers in the area.

Recently it was the tenth anniversary of the tragic accident to the oil tanker, the 'Sea Empress' on the rocks at the mouth of the Haven. It is easy to imagine how dangerous it would have been there in the Middle Ages and how useful the Beacon Chapels were for those sailing in the area.

◆ ◆ A New Venture in Assisi

We Anglican Franciscans are a small, recently formed branch of the Franciscan movement, but as such we too are delighted to have been able to find a home among the spiritual sons and daughters of Francis and Clare in Assisi.

That home has found its concrete reality in a small rented apartment in the old city, not far from the Basilica of St. Francis, where Brother **Thomas Anthony** is establishing an Anglican Chaplaincy in the city on behalf of the Diocese in Europe. We have the use of a little church with a service every Sunday morning, and we are also involved with the *Centro Internazionale per il Dialogo* (CEFID), run by the Conventual Friars (OFM Conv), in its work of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. They also have self-catering accommodation for ecumenical groups.

The task is first of all to represent Anglican Franciscans among the many other Franciscan groups present, but also to be a resource for the thousands of people who come to Assisi every year. They come for all sorts of reasons but all are pilgrims one way or another and the hope is to be available whether by providing some background, directing people to the places of interest, by giving informal walking tours, or by helping to find accommodation.

It is intended that other brothers and sisters from the First and Third orders will work

with **Thomas Anthony** and he will always be happy to have company, whether people come for visits, to assist in the work of the chaplaincy, or to relieve him when he has to be away. A donation will be asked from visitors who come to stay. Because of local sensibilities sisters and other female guests will stay at CEFID, just a three minutes walk away.

To find out more, contact Thomas Anthony in Assisi (see address page 13) or follow the link from www.franciscans.org.uk

◆ ◆ Algy SSF

23 November 2005 was the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Father Algy, a co-founder with Brother Douglas of SSF. Brother Anselm wrote the following remembrance of him:

About ten brothers in this Province remember Algy, all with different memories – he was very much 'all things to all men' which makes defining him so difficult. Anything remembered can be countered with a 'but'. An iron fist in a velvet glove? Just as often, the other way round.

I remember two constants.

First, the sense of direction, of purpose. Everything was for Jesus, for his kingdom, for the achievement of what he believed to be his life's work – the way he hastened from being late from one appointment to being late for the next. My last memory is of him walking up the path from Clare House (then 'The Friars' House') towards the garage where the van waited(!) to carry him from the priests' retreat. He was leaving for the final appointment, as it turned out.

Second, never far away was the sense of humour – not that he went in for wisecracks, but that there was always a gentle irony which went with his ability to get to the bottom of things with people. There were those among the senior brothers on whom all that was lost, who couldn't see beyond the inconsistencies and the unpunctuality. That was a dominant factor in friary politics, and I think gave rise to such mixed messages about him. As ever in Religious Life, we're so wonderful with other people, and hopeless with each other.

Whatever the memories, the exaggerations, we can be sure of this. Anyone who has experienced the love of God through the medium of SSF is indebted to Algy whose painful life's work was its creation. And is – he's still around. It's just that he's a little late – 50 years, to be exact.

◆ ◆ College of Evangelists

Desmond Alban was commissioned as a member of the National College of Evangelists, by the Bishop of Lichfield on behalf of the two Archbishops, at Lichfield Cathedral on Thursday 23 March 2006. The College was inaugurated in 1999 and exists



Father Algy SSF

to provide recognition from the wider Church and mutual support and fellowship for those called to a ministry of evangelism beyond the local parish and diocese. Founder members include a number of well-known and lesser-known evangelists across the various traditions of the Church of England, amongst them Brothers **Bernard** and **Martin**. **Phyllis** was admitted in 2001.

◆ ◆ Round up

Amos has moved to Hilfield and **Mark Edmund** to Saint Martin's Vicarage, Plaistow. **Jenny Tee** has moved to Birmingham and **Hilary** will move to Compton Durville in June (please note the change of address when sending in subscription renewals). **Andrew**, whilst remaining a member of this province, has returned to Goroka in Papua New Guinea. f



franciscan Questionnaire

The Editorial Board is grateful to those who have returned the questionnaire sent out with the last issue of *franciscan*. Over 600 responses have been received, about a third of the number sent out, which indicates a high level of interest in SSF among our readers. A quick look through the responses demonstrates that the balance of material is about right, and suggestions for future issues will be taken into account when we plan the next series.

St. Mary at the Cross – Glasshampton Monastery

On the top of a hill in Worcestershire, a mile up a pot-holed farm track, the intrepid pilgrim can turn to survey a view that sweeps across the Severn valley. Here at the monastery of St. Mary at the Cross the SSF finds its place as a community in the tradition of Franciscan contemplative prayer. It is a tradition that goes right back to the early hermitages beloved of St. Francis in the mountains of Umbria and beyond.

The house itself was originally a stable-block, built for a large mansion now ploughed under the neighbouring field. The stables were built around 1810, but the main house burned down soon afterwards and was never rebuilt. After this, one corner of the stables was used as a gamekeeper's cottage. In the early years of the twentieth century, Fr. William Sirr of the Society of the Divine Compassion (SDC) felt called by God to leave his work in the East End of London to lead a life of prayer in a more secluded setting. In the winter of 1918 he moved to Glasshampton and established the religious life in this place.

Fr. William lived here for nearly 20 years, leading a life of silence, contemplation, intercessory prayer and manual labour. He renovated the building to make it habitable again. People came to stay for shorter or longer periods of time, finding in him a spiritual director of great holiness. Fr. William had always hoped to found a Cistercian style community at Glasshampton, but as the years went by it became clear that no community was going to form around him. He died in 1937, and his grave can be found in the monastery garth.

In 1947 the brothers of the Society of St. Francis were invited to come to live at Glasshampton. From that time the monastery has acted as a place where a group of professed brothers seek to live out the contemplative side of the Franciscan charism, novice brothers receive part of their training, and guests come for a time of

retreat. Our day is structured around the Daily Office, and other times of communal prayer in the chapel, much of which we sing to Gregorian chant. The daily Eucharist, and the times of silent prayer morning and evening, also help us in our aim to maintain a sense of stillness and waiting on God, even amidst all the business of cooking, cleaning and tending the garden. This includes keeping the central cloister quiet and having silent meals. We do this in order to nurture an awareness of the presence of God who throughout the day, meets us when our hearts are open to the silent wonder of God's love.

Many brothers have lived here over the years. Local people still talk with great



In the kitchen, Fr. Nicholas Alexander at work. He moved to the monastery in 2006.

affection of brothers such as Alban, Ramon and others who have lived here in the past. At present we are four resident brothers: Benedict, the Guardian of the House and Novice Guardian; Jason Robert, who is with us from the Province of the Americas for two years; Roger Alexander, who joined us in the

autumn of 2005, having moved from the SSF house in Cambridge; and Nicholas Alan, who until May 2006 has been attending an ordination course at Queen's College in Birmingham two days a week. Many others have stayed here in recent years, but have now flown further afield, such as Thomas Anthony in Assisi, James Anthony in Tanzania, and Andrew now back in Papua New Guinea. Hosting brothers from other provinces is also a great joy for us, and our lives have been enriched by Athanasius from PNG,



Nicholas Alan in the chapel

Stephen from Korea and others from the Melanesian Brotherhood.

The main ministry of the house is to the people who come to stay with us. The guestwing of the monastery has five rooms for men or women staying on retreat. Guests

usually stay for up to six days, between Tuesday afternoon and Monday morning. Working guests stay for up to two weeks and help us greatly, from cooking pies to pruning roses. Individuals, and small groups from parishes, have Quiet Days here; and friends from the local farms and villages join us from time to time for services during the week. People staying with us enjoy walking in the gardens and beyond the monastery, following one of the many footpaths in the area. We are privileged to live in an area of

great natural beauty, surrounded by woods and fields. People sometimes ask to see one of the brothers for spiritual direction or confession, or use the time to study, or simply take the opportunity to relax and come closer to God away from the pressures of life at home or at work. Many return year after year for an annual retreat, finding in Glasshampton a spiritual home that helps to keep their lives centred in God. f

Would you like to come for a week or two as a Working Guest at Glasshampton Monastery? The work is mainly gardening/DIY or kitchen/cleaning/sewing. Join a small group of brothers in a pleasant prayerful house surrounded by countryside. Apply to The Guestbrother, Glasshampton Monastery, Shrawley, Worcester WR6 6TQ or email glasshamptonssf@franciscans.org.uk.

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The Old Parsonage, 168 Wroslyn Road, **Freeland**, Witney, Oxon OX29 8AQ ☎ (01993) 881227

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Saint Mary of the Angels Friary, **Haruro**, PO Box 78, Popondetta 241, Oro Province ☎ PNG 329 7060

Saint Margaret's Friary, **Katerada**, PO Box 78, Popondetta 241, Oro Province

Saint Francis Friary, **Koki**, PO Box 1103, Port Moresby, NCD
☎ & fax: PNG 320 1499
✉ ssfpng@dg.com.pg

Douglas House, Chinatown, **Lae**, PO Box 3411, Morobe Province ☎ & fax: PNG 472 1842

Martyrs' House, PO Boz 78, **Popondetta**, Oro Province

Philip Friary, **Ukaka**, PO Box 22, Alotau, Milne Bay Province

SOLOMON ISLANDS

St Francis Friary, PO Box 7, **Auki**, Malaita Province
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La Verna Friary / Little Portion, **Hautambu**, PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal

Patteson House, PO Box 519, **Honiara**, Guadalcanal
☎ Honiara 22386 Regional Office: ☎ & fax 25810
✉ francis@welkam.solomon.com.sb

San Damiano Friary, Diocese of Hanuato'o, **Kira Kira**, Makira Ulawa Province ☎ 50031

St Bonaventure Friary, **Kohimarama** Theological College, PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal

Michael Davis Friary, PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal

Holy Martyrs Friary, Luisalo, PO Box 50, Lata, **Temotu** Province

WEBSITES

web portal for all provinces: www.anglicanfranciscans.org/

C/SSF European Province: www.franciscans.org.uk

CSF American Province (Province of the Americas)
www.communitystfrancis.org

SSF American Province (Province of the Americas): www.s-s-f.org/

SSF Australia / New Zealand Province: www.franciscan.org.au

Hilfield Youth Camp: www.hilfield.org

Third Order SSF European Province: www.orders.anglican.org/tssf/

Korean Franciscan Brotherhood: www.francis.or.kr/

Celebrating Common Prayer: www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/

Exciting Holiness: www.oremus.org/liturgy/e-h/

Anglican Religious Communities' Year Book: www.orders.anglican.org/arcb/

Church of England: www.church-of-england.org/

Anglican Communion: www.anglicancommunion.org/

Hilfield Families Camp

28 July – 7 August 2006

contact: Mr and Mrs Mike Aaronson
(01483) 811655 or e-mail:
aaronson@ddell.demon.co.uk

Hilfield Youth Camp

(13 – 17 year olds)

13 – 20 August 2006

contact: Vicky and Chris
vixandchris@yahoo.co.uk
www.hilfield.org

An extensive range of Franciscan books and pamphlets is available from the
Franciscan International Study Centre,

Giles Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NA

For a booklist, contact them at the above address or

Tel: 01227 769 349

Fax: 01227 768 648

email: info@franciscans.ac.uk
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Pilgrims of St Francis

International Pilgrimage

21-29 July 2006 on Gotland, Sweden

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19-26 August 2006

Beverly (Humberside) to York

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Book Reviews

Keith Ward

What the Bible Really Teaches:

A challenge for fundamentalists

ISBN 0 281 05680 3

SPCK, London, 2004, £9.99

'I am a born-again Christian. But I do not believe what born-again Christians are supposed to believe ...'

Professor Ward has had a distinguished career in academic theology but this book emerges from something much simpler. He seems to have become aware from his earliest days as a committed Christian that the Bible simply doesn't say what many of his friends told him it said, and as he explores that theme here he distinguishes beliefs which are 'properly evangelical' from those fundamentalist views that he argues are not really Bible-based at all. He admits that this is an adversarial book, and attacks Christian fundamentalism for being highly selective in its emphasis on a few favourite biblical texts which are then often distorted or given a very implausible meaning in order to fit a set of beliefs already held.

So, in this readable and engaging book Ward challenges the reader to look again at what the Bible says. Sometimes this can be quite provocative, as when he establishes quite clearly that either what Matthew says is false – that Jesus taught the Torah should be kept in the fullest rigour – so there are definitely false statements in the New Testament, or else, if Matthew is accurate, then 'Christians do, and should, disobey the clear moral teaching of Jesus', which is exactly what he forces the reader to acknowledge that we all do. Either way it follows that some moral injunctions in the Bible, even if they are said to be issued by Jesus himself, are in fact not binding upon Christians!

Here, as in other chapters, Ward finds a way forward through the principle of sublation, the cancelling of an obvious or literal meaning of a text by a later teaching which leads us to discover a deeper spiritual interpretation. This is one of six principles of interpretation that he outlines very clearly in a helpful early chapter. What follows in later chapters are concrete examples of these principles in action, as he interprets biblical teaching about the Coming of Christ in Glory, about Salvation, about Judgement, Heaven and Hell – eight such themes in all.

My own reactions varied. On some points I rejoiced when Ward crystallized conclusions that I had been tentatively reaching towards myself for some time, and there are other moments when I've been delighted to find satisfactory solutions to problems that have previously perplexed me. The whole thrust is towards optimistic, inclusive and positive interpretations that really do sound more like Good News than

do most fundamentalist teachings! In places though, I found myself thinking, 'Yes, but what about . . . ?' as other passages of scripture came to mind, and there are times when what he regards as fundamentalist might be seen by many as mainstream, or at least to have been so in the fairly recent past. In the end, on each particular matter, readers will have to judge for themselves whether Ward succeeds in his aim of being more biblical than those he disagrees with, but to acknowledge that is perhaps to concede one of his main points, that there is not 'just one correct interpretation, which is obvious by just reading the Bible ... the Bible contains some shocking facts for fundamentalists.'

Desmond Alban SSF

Nicola Slee

Praying Like a Woman

ISBN 0 281 05599 8

SPCK, London, 2004, £9.99

In *franciscan*, May 2005, Nicola Slee writes in her article 'Praying Like a Woman', 'Any spirituality worthy of the name must engage with the full reality of what it means to be human and, for me, this means that my prayer is rooted in ... all that I experience as a woman ...'

Her collection of poetry, prose and liturgical verse bear this out, being textured by the experiences of living, loving, struggling and suffering from within our human condition. From her raw and gutsy words is wrung the belief that the locus for the Divine encounter is precisely the mess and beauty of our human condition and for the author, the condition of her womanhood.

This gathering of honest, heart-felt cries of pain and praise offers a refreshing and daring voice for those feeling paralysed and excluded by masculine images for the Divine. She gives us a God who is to be discovered everywhere and in everyone: 'in the worker and shirker, the stumbler and raver; in the cursed and lonely, the loony, the silent; in the angel, the fool and the friend ...'

God is Quister and Jester: 'Jester God, clown your disruptive presence / Into the comedy of my days ...' Her words rise above self pity, and consecrate her losses and griefs to the cause of God's Domain. In her poem 'Prayer of A Childless Woman' she writes: 'Though this belly has never swollen with the burden of a baby, let me grow big with the longing for justice which shall be for all the children of God.' (I recommend this particular prayer for all living a life of consecrated celibacy).

Here in this collection are words and images that may startle some with their frankness and newness. They invite the reader into a wide vista of unfettered exploration. For those, particularly women, searching for a holistic way to pray, these pithy and beautiful poems and prayers can only encourage and enrich the praying life. Anyone concerned for contemporary, inclusive and 'human' prayer and liturgical material will find here a rich treasure.

Catherine Joy CSF

Andrew White

Iraq: Searching for Hope

ISBN 0 8264 8630 4

Continuum, 2005, £9.99

If you want an antidote to the wretched news we seem to get from the mass media day after day, here is a book with a different slant. Andrew White gives us a more positive picture. The author is well experienced in building peace, especially through personal relationships: he is President of the Foundation for Peace in the Middle East, and Director of the Iraqi Institute for Peace. He has spent years in the Middle East, both in Palestine/Israel and in Iraq, while that country and its people were still smarting under the repression of Saddam Hussein.

All the while he was busy sowing the seeds of peace well before the invasion. He has had his brushes with danger, but never stopped building contacts with peace-minded people. Much of what he has to recount is fascinating, especially his adventures after the Coalition's invasion and the toppling of Saddam Hussein.

He has managed to bring together Shi'ites and Sunnis, as well as Iraqi Christians, and the book concludes with the text of the two Religious Accords signed in 2004. There are too many people to remember mentioned in the book, but White includes a helpful *Who is Who*.

Any book of this sort, which is largely a first-person account of events, has its drawbacks for the reader, no matter how interested he or she may be in the subject. (And should not all of us be?) It easily becomes a narrative of 'Look what I have done, what danger I have been exposed to, what I have managed to achieve', etc. Neither did White make me change my mind about the justness of the invasion, in spite of devoting a chapter to the subject. Nonetheless, the work that he is doing, as part of the work of the International Centre for Reconciliation from its base at Coventry Cathedral, deserves to be better known and appreciated. Working for peace while the wounds of both oppression and of war are still fresh and raw is seemingly impossible, and we may never know the results of the

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effort, but, thank God that somebody is spending his life making the effort. If nothing else, we should keep Iraq a priority in our prayers.

Thomas Anthony SSF

Richard Chartres
Tree of Knowledge, Tree of Life
ISBN 0 8192 8123 9

Continuum, 2005, £9.99

That this should be the first book not from the pen but from the lips of the Bishop of London is surprising. We are fortunate that these sermons and addresses were scripted and preserved.

'...to open the daylight world, where decisions are made about the conditions and institutions which influence our lives, to the transforming power of spiritual awareness is the challenge which is a central theme of the reflections gathered in this book.' (From the back cover). So, Part 1 is a single address to lawyers on this central theme.

Part 2 takes us through the Christian Year – Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Whitsun, Christmas.

Part 3, inevitably, from a Bishop of London, sermons preached on occasions of general or national interest.

What is special about something so unfashionable as a book of sermons? It is that on every page there is something memorable, fresh, something which connects. Here are two tasters:-

'Desire which arises from a sense of deficiency, and a desire to fill that black hole, in the end leads to desperation. Desire awakened by the love of the risen Christ transforms our lives into the gold of selfless joy'. Easter 2004, St Paul's Cathedral.

'At this service we give up our food and drink at the offertory into the hands of Jesus so that we become his guests and receive our life from him. The elements become charged with a new potential because they are no longer our possessions but gifts. In every eucharist the meaning of the material world is changed from the kind of possession which inevitably gives rise to conflict, to gift which creates the conditions for reconciliation between human beings.' Easter 2002, Much Hadham.

Elsewhere, Ignatius the Martyr is quoted – 'A bishop never more resembles Jesus Christ than when his mouth is shut'. This reviewer hopes that Bishop Chartres will continue to open his, and that his first book of sermons is not also his last. *Anselm SSF*

John Bowden (Ed.)
Christianity: The Complete Guide
ISBN 0 8264 5937 4

Continuum, London, 2005, £35.00

Yes, this could be called 'a mighty tome'. It fulfils that description in terms of material bulk, but 'tome' also implies a weightiness of content – scholarship, theory or information. One hundred and seventy six contributors associated with prestigious centres of learning or highly reputable Christian institutions provide one thousand

two hundred and fifty nine articles. This goes a long way to reassure us of the high standard of the contents.

The volume is published as a guide, which can lead the reader to a fairly comprehensive review of the matter in which he is interested. For example, looking up 'Desert Fathers' in the Index leads to a short half-paragraph under 'Buildings' which includes a reference to Anthony of Egypt, and to a box on 'Desert and Wilderness' in the entry on 'Spirituality' which gives a useful factual overview and a reference to H.A. Williams' 'The True Wilderness' from the same publisher. This also indicates the very anglican (small a) focus of the Guide. There is no entry for 'Scete' or 'Cassian' in the index but looking up 'Macarius' takes us to a box under 'The Hesychasts' in the article on 'Mysticism' but the references at the end of this section would have only incidental mention of the Desert Fathers.

This book, we may perhaps conclude, would have a useful place in the library of a Secondary School or of a college whose students are preparing for lay Christian service who will want to inform themselves with a useful and beneficial measure of background knowledge for their work. This approach to applied knowledge rather than abstract is shown in the list of 'Gateway' articles highlighted in the List of Articles at the beginning.

This listing of key subjects and other devices, including line drawings, black and white reproductions and plates, together with its clear typography, makes this volume one that will be looked at by the casual user of any library where it is readily on view and could stimulate interest and lead many young people to more in-depth study of some subject that excites their interest.

Andrew SSF

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of
England and Wales
A Place of Redemption
A Christian Approach to Punishment and Prison

ISBN 0 08601 2393 6

Burns & Oates, London, 2004, £9.99

Anyone, whether Christian or not, who wants to give serious and balanced consideration to the debate about crime and punishment would do well to read this book. It is a report from the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference Department for Christian Responsibility and Citizenship, and as such draws on gospel principles and on the social teaching of the Catholic Church. It does so, however, in a very accessible way that is thoroughly grounded in well researched and up to date facts and figures about the current state of the prison service.

I was challenged to think more deeply about the implications of the Christian belief that humanity is created in the image of God. What does it mean to fulfil the apparently conflicting demands of justice and mercy when it comes to determining penal policy?

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The shop stocks religious books, including many with a Franciscan theme. The books, some of which have been reviewed in *franciscan*, may be obtained by mail order but only if held in stock.

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When sentencing an offender how are we to balance the needs to contain, to deter, to punish and to reform?

The report gives disturbing statistics which amply illustrate that, as presently constituted, the prison system simply does not 'work.' But it also makes numerous recommendations which could indeed turn prison into 'a place of redemption' if only the will and the resources were made available. These recommendations are summarised at the end of the report under the headings: Victims; Inside Prison (22 recommendations here alone); Alternatives to Prison; Parole; Social Attitudes; and The Church.

One initiative that the report commends is that of Community Chaplaincy. Volunteers are recruited from churches and other faith groups to work under the supervision of a community chaplain in befriending and mentoring released prisoners. Wormwood Scrubs, where I am a chaplain, is in the process of setting up such an initiative; Feltham Young Offenders Institute has already got funding and is under way. It is my hope that some of those reading this review might be encouraged to read the book and get involved in community chaplaincy or some other initiative for the support and resettlement of offenders.

Gina CSF

Patrick Woodhouse
With You is the Well of Life
Praise from the depth of the Heart
ISBN 1 84417 380 1

Kevin Mayhew, 2005, £9.99

Here is a profound series of short prayers excellent for personal use and also (as the guidelines explain) possible to use in public worship, as the author, who is Precentor of Wells Cathedral, has shown at Evening Worship. It has been much appreciated. There are two halves to the book: 'Prayers for Abiding in the Love of God' and 'Prayers for seeking the Kingdom of God'.

Bernard SSF

Vows To Set You Free

**Extracts from a sermon preached by Benedict SSF
at the First Profession of Bart SSF at Hilfield Friary
on 30 October 2005.**

St. Francis was one of those whose eyes were opened fully to the true world: the presence of a loving God at the centre of a world full of hatred and violence. St. Francis saw that the created order was shot through with the glory of God – and that men and women are made in God's image. And as Franciscans we have glimpsed that truth for ourselves and we take our vows to help us to live out this reality, even if misunderstood as so much foolishness in the eyes of the secular world. Francis caught a glimpse of that great love which is like a fire always burning at the centre, the heart, of God. And he responded totally to that love with a lavish, extravagant, costly and reckless giving of his all.

This total response to the God who is at the centre and is the meaning of all life is not just for the favoured few – it is for all. Jesus said, 'If any wish to be a follower of mine, they must leave self behind; day after day they must take up their cross and come with me.' There is no second or economy-class Christian with lower standards; the vowed religious life isn't a superior one. The call and the invitation to follow Jesus is the same for us all – a call for a total commitment, in the way that is most appropriate for each one of us.

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heart, of God.*

I am a Franciscan brother because I realised that for me this is the best and most total way I can respond to the Lord's love for me and his demand to leave self behind and come with him. Today Bart is taking his vows in our Society because he, too, is convinced that this is the particular way he can best make his response to the total love of the Lord for him and the world. And we make that response not in vague or sentimental terms but in very specific and practical ways – in terms of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Each of these represents a liberation. Poverty: as St. Paul says, 'having nothing we own the world.' Not hemmed in by property we can be free to go where God wants us to be. Chastity means that we are more free to give ourselves to God and more available for all people. Obedience means we free ourselves from the slavery of self – free completely to do his will. But these freedoms can only be attained through first a giving up, a restricting, a renunciation. We will only be free to fly as a bird if we really do give up possessions and all the things we

hang on to and clutch at. Chastity only brings us the freedom to love many people with openness and generosity if first we give up our right to the intimacy of sexual relations, marriage, and all exclusive and possessive friendships. Obedience seems the very denial of freedom, yet it is only as we do deny our own will very specifically that we discover the true freedom of God's children – and that the service of God is for us perfect freedom.

So as Bart openly sets himself on the road to renunciation – day after day taking up his cross and walking with Jesus – so he will discover, hopefully, the true freedom of God's children and make the response that is most appropriate to him to that great love which like a fire is always burning in the heart of God.

Some wag summed up the vows rather negatively – 'no money, no sex and do as you are told!' But the vows are far from being negative; they are meant to and do challenge, excite, be life giving. Living out the vows is not easy – but a married couple will tell you that too! We are such human, frail creatures, with feet of clay. Over the 30-odd years I have been in vows I have certainly found each of them a struggle. Mercifully, I have on the whole only had to struggle with them one at a time – but on occasion it seemed as if it were all three together! And we don't live them very well. The vow of poverty is one which can create a lot of guilt and uneasiness among us – especially as St. Francis was so adamant about it. Each brother views poverty from a different angle. As Guardian for seven years at Glasshampton I have seen quite a few brothers move to another house – but some have needed something like a Pickford's

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removal van to get them from A to B with all the books and papers, clothes, and knick-knacks squirreled away over the years! It is a struggle to wrestle with how the vow of poverty ought to be lived out in our Franciscan community in our own day.

Chastity – well, there's a real humdinger! Our social and cultural background is not sympathetic to the idea of chastity and there

is enormous pressure towards sexual expression. The celibate life is not seen as normal (and often I agree!) We are fully sexual beings: it is important that we are comfortable and at ease with our sexuality, and never try to suppress it; that will only damage us. I have at times wondered whether castration at profession might solve a problem or two! But celibacy isn't meant to destroy you, but in union with your brothers and sisters, and by God's grace, may you discover that channelled, disciplined and focused on Christ, it will help you to be ever warm and affectionate, tender and fully human. Celibacy is God's gift – but it can only be lived if you really want a deep intimacy with the Lord and that relationship you believe he is calling you to.

Obedience isn't about doing what you are told, which creates an infantile attitude which is degrading and obnoxious. The Latin root for obedience is *ob audire* which means 'to listen' – listening to God, who is the one to whom you have to be obedient, in your prayer, and through the community, which is the way God tends to work for us. It will involve dialogue and communication with your brothers and sisters as you listen together for God's will – participating in the decision making and shouldering your share of the responsibility that goes with it.

And as Bart makes his offering today with all the generosity that he can, we who have made our vows, perhaps many years ago, could be reminded to take a look at ourselves, and wonder: How much have I taken back of what I so much wanted to give? How much have I compromised and sought the best of both/all worlds? How much have I wanted the freedom without the renunciation? And we realise that our life is not a matter of a vow made once for all which will recede into history, but a day by day, every day responding, in many different situations, with a great YES to God. *f*

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Year Book 2006-7

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Desmond Tutu

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